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## Indianapolis Teaches Future Super Bowl Host Cities that Convenience is King



Image via Wikipedia

I hate to say I told you so, [but...](#)

Indianapolis knocked it out of the park as host city for Super Bowl XLVI by most accounts...be it NFL executives, fans, corporate types in town for both business and pleasure. You name it, they liked it.

No question, the weather was a major surprise and contributed some to how well the event was pulled off.

But let's make no mistake about it, folks, Indy's success as Super Bowl host was no Hail Mary fluke.

Its planning and execution was akin to the precision demonstrated by New England's ending drive of the first half, the Patriots' opening drive of the 2nd half, and New York's Super Bowl winning drive which made Eli Manning the toast of Manhattan in the house built by brother Peyton's successes as a Colt.

So what Super Bowl hosting lessons can we take from Indianapolis?

### **Bigger is Not Always Better...Convenience is King**

Perhaps it's kismet that this is our first point when you consider that the NCAA – headquartered in Indy – seems hell-bent to eventually increase the size of March Madness to 500 teams as opposed to the comfortable 64 we had not long ago.

But I digress...

Compactness equals convenience, and people like convenience. Some examples of this from my travels as a sports consultant:

- San Antonio is enjoyed by visiting sports fans because (a) [the Riverwalk](#) offers plenty of entertainment amenities and lodging options and (b) is a short walk to the Alamodome;

downtown Omaha make it convenient for out-of-town travelers to enjoy themselves without being too terribly far from the games;

- St. Louis has played host to Final Fours, NCAA Basketball Regionals, the NCAA Wrestling Championships, as well as the annual Arch Madness (the Missouri Valley Conference's Men's Basketball Championships). Whether contested at Scottrade Center or the Edward Jones Dome, both facilities are within walking distance of historic [Laclede's Landing](#), the much improved Washington Avenue, and is a short cab or shuttle ride to the festive and eclectic [Soulard neighborhood](#) which is home to the second largest Mardi Gras celebration in the United States.

In all 4 cases, these cities have had a history of success attracting amateur sporting events and conventions because (a) they have quality facilities for the events they attract, (b) they have enough quality hotels for the events they attract, (c) the proximity between their venues, lodging, and entertainment amenities fosters a level of convenience that visitors appreciate because they don't have to worry about excessively long and expensive cab rides...or getting lost in unfamiliar surroundings.

And most importantly for many sports spectators be they corporate or common Joe...you can freely imbibe and then simply stumble back to your hotel room.

Now apply these principles to Indianapolis:

- Clearly, Lucas Oil Stadium is among the NFL's best stadiums;
- Downtown Indianapolis has ample quality lodging options close to downtown...unless you're the Orlando Magic. In truth, they could probably stand to have 1-2 more major hotels close to downtown...but what they had for Super Bowl XLVI certainly was more than adequate. If it weren't, the NFL would not have agreed to take the game there;
- And most importantly, the proximity between the stadium, the hotels, and the entertainment amenities shot the convenience quotient for out-of-town visitors through the roof...with the most taxing commutes of Super Bowl XLVI week in Indy being the 7 miles to either the Indianapolis Airport or driving north to either Broad Ripple's entertainment district or to Butler University to catch a Bulldog basketball game.

As weather was noted earlier, perhaps one of the biggest benefits of compactness is that it helps to safeguard against weather concerns. Even if Indy had snowy or icy conditions, people would have by and large still been traveling by foot once on the ground in Indy aside from the short commute from the airport. As such, visitors would not be as crippled from a transportation perspective.

Naturally, not every future Super Bowl host city can be as compact as Indy. And not every future host city will have the added edge of annually hosting one of the world's largest sporting spectacles...the Indianapolis 500. These were huge advantages which the city of Indianapolis, their Super Bowl Host



capitalize on their natural resources, and make strategic arrangements to minimize anything that would otherwise minimize visitor convenience.

New Orleans has a compactness to it for sure, but its facility isn't on par with Cowboys Stadium, Lucas Oil, or University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale. For the party animal Super Bowl crowd, the importance of compactness coupled with the element of debauchery has trumped the importance of facility quality in New Orleans. And I think – much like the NBA has a charitable soft-side for the economically ravaged city – the NFL partly keeps New Orleans in the loop for altruistic reasons...though I'm not sure if that generosity will last forever.

Most eyes are looking ahead to Super Bowl XLVIII at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey. Though clearly not as compact as the Midwestern cities outlined above, mass transit will greatly combat the “sprawl factor” there. I look forward to seeing where that host committee will place their NFL Experience and Super Bowl Village in order to maximize fan and corporate convenience and appeal. If I were them, I'd make sure I'd incorporate the new [Barclays](#) Center in Brooklyn as well as the hip Hoboken downtown as 2 locations for visitors to take in the sites and sounds of the Big [Apple](#).

From friends and colleagues that attended the Glendale Super Bowl some years ago, one common complaint was too much sprawl with too few options to connect the many entertainment and lodging dots throughout the greater Phoenix area. That said, knowing some of the folks behind the scenes who will be involved with the logistics of managing the ancillary events surrounding the big game, expect the Glendale experience to be much improved in 2015.

That said, if Glendale can host its 2nd Super Bowl in the span of 8 years, I'll re-assert that Indianapolis will host its 2nd Super Bowl sometime between 2017 and 2020.

Why?

Because compactness yields convenience.

Because out-of-town visitors crave convenience.

Because their facility is Top Tier in all respects.

Because their community is experienced in absorbing the largest of sporting events.

One thing is for sure...Indianapolis' *hosting touchdown* last week has certainly raised the crossbar for future Super Bowl host cities.

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